

Mental Health And Wellness #2

Identify ways your school can promote mental health and wellness by improving students' self-worth and stress management skills.



Description: In the first years of GMS your school focused on improving a child's health through physical activity, eating well, and staying tobacco free. Now it is time to complete the picture of a healthy child by addressing mental health and wellness. By promoting mental health, you will help your students reach their full potential in school and in life. Remember to involve faculty and staff to improve their mental health, too.

Resources

What Every Child Needs for Good Mental Health

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/get-info>

Ten Activities to Improve Students' Self Concept

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson085.shtml

Child Adolescent School Health

<http://www.health.utah.gov/CASH>

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Stress Management

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Assignments

School Coordinator Assignments

- Participate in activities that promote self-esteem, stress management, etc. as a school
- Provide teachers with ideas for mental health and wellness activities that they can use in their classrooms
- Promote Mental Health Month in May <http://www.nmha.org/go/may/>

Mentor Assignments

- Provide assistance to any faculty member needing additional support for their classroom activity
- Write a description for the mid-year and end-year reports

Mental Health And Wellness #2 Ideas

- Teach Prevention Dimensions in each grade; they have wonderful lessons plans encouraging exploration and acceptance of self, anger, stress management and more <http://www.utahpd.org/curriculum.htm>
- Ensure that the mental health components of the USOE Health Education core curriculum are being taught <http://www.uen.org/core/health/>
 - Grades K-2 Core
 - Standard I: Students will develop a sense of self
 - Standard II: Students will develop a sense of self in relation to families and community
 - Grades 3-6 Health Education
 - Standard I: Healthy Self
 - Standard III: Human Development and Relationships
- Use the mind-mapping activity in class (see page 8)
- Read the book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst; Afterwards discuss what it means to have a bad day and see if children are willing to share a bad day they might have had recently; Then discuss ways to deal with bad days and bad feelings; Ask students what they do to feel better after a bad day and make a list; Identify all types of “coping skills” and display them in the classroom as a reminder of ways to deal with stress
- Promote an open door policy at Principal’s office where students may go to talk about their problems and concerns in a safe environment
- Provide notebooks for teachers to track irregular behavior in students to provide extra assistance to those who need it
- Include a mental health section in your school newsletter or create a mental health and wellness newsletter
 - Include zen quotes for inspiration
<http://www.heartsandminds.org/quotes/quotes.htm>
<http://www.coolquotes.com/categories.php>
- Incorporate mental health into other subjects
 - Have students write a poem or story about feelings
 - Encourage students to read books that promote mental health
 - Include a word relating to peace, happiness, harmony on each spelling list
- Teach faculty, staff and students about the importance of sleep and encourage them to get enough
- Read *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss
 - Lead a discussion where students talk about their feelings what leads them to feel that way and how they cope with their feelings
 - Emphasize the fact that feeling sad is normal, crying is ok, etc. but if we feel sad all of the time we may need extra help to feel better
 - Let student know they can talk to you if they think they are sad too much

Self-Esteem

- Establish a “Random Act of Kindness” award; find reward ideas in the *Rewards Kids Will Crave* booklet
- Teach students to focus on their own progress and achieving their own personal best rather than grades
- Pick one activity from the article *Ten Activities to Improve Students’ Self Concept* that would work best in your classroom
http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson085.shtml
- Use “Complimentary Points” from *Rewards Kids Will Crave* to help build morale in the classroom
 - Students earn a point when they are caught giving another student a compliment
 - Keep track of each students’ progress on an individual chart, individual 3x5 card or classroom chart
 - For every five points earned, the class can be rewarded by earning time to watch an educational video, extra walking time, or recess time
- Use “Mini-Messages” from *Rewards Kids Will Crave* to teach children to do nice things for one another, and increase their self-worth
 - Each student has a “mailbox”
 - When students have extra time, they can write mini-messages on white paper to each other and put them in their “mailboxes”. They love seeing these from their peers
 - When you see them doing good things, write them a mini-message on pink paper with specific praise. Students LOVE seeing the pink papers from you
- There are many cooperative PE games that include everyone (examples in *Traditional PE Activities* document in the Physical Activity Folder)
- In competitions don’t exclude the losers, find a way for them to participate
- Include students when changes or important decisions are being made
- Give leadership responsibilities to everyone in the classroom
- There are a number of books with ideas about teaching Self-esteem in the classroom here are just a few to get you started
 - *Building Self-Esteem through the Museum of I* by Linda R. Zack
 - *I Make a Difference* by Michele C. Tamaren
 - *Expanding Your Child's Horizons* by Dr. Art Attwell
 - *Positive Risks, Challenges and Other Paths to Success*
 - *Jumpstarters*
 - *104 Activities That Build* by Alanna Jones

Stress

- Teach students about stress and how they can learn to create their own coping skills
- Educate faculty and staff about childhood stress
- Order stress balls from the tobacco prevention incentives
- Provide classes to faculty and staff about stress management, time management, yoga, etc.
- Teach students about using exercise as a stress relief and then go run/walk the Gold Medal Mile
- Order posters about stress from <http://www.hopehealth.com/posters-template.asp?cat=Stress>

- There are a number of books dealing with stress here are a few to get you started
 - *Coping Skills Interventions for Children and Adolescents* by Susan G. Forman
 - *How to take the GRRR Out of Anger* by Elizabeth Verdick and Majorie Lisovskis
 - *Stress can really get on your Nerves!* by Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick



Promote Mental Health and Wellness Description Template

A description must include specific details describing how the school completed the criteria. If you are writing a description for criteria that the school achieved in previous years please include a description of what the school is doing **this year** to maintain that level not what they did in previous years.

A Gold Medal Schools description does not require an Intent, Rationale, Reinforcement or the principal's signature. Use this template to write your description (all information is required).

A sample description for this criterion is provided on the next page.

The description must include...

- ❑ A description of what activities students and faculty were involved in to promote mental health and wellness



Promote Mental Health and Wellness Description

Green Meadow Elementary had many activities throughout the year to promote mental health and wellness to our students. Activities included:

- Using the Gold Medal Mile as a form of stress relief; along the way we had quick facts about stress relief posted on orange cones for the students to read
- Teachers read *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst; Afterwards they discussed what it meant to have a bad day and ways students coped with bad days; They then made a list of ways students dealt with bad days and displayed it in their classrooms as a reminder of ways to deal with stress
- A “Random Acts of Kindness Award” certificate was created for faculty to pass out to students when they saw them helping others;
- Participated in Mental Health Month in May
 - 4th –6th grade students made posters describing what they felt it meant to be Mentally Healthy; the posters were displayed in the hallways
 - Stress and time management techniques were distributed to faculty and staff; all teachers and staff got stress balls
 - A yoga teacher came each Tuesday after school in May to teach a yoga class to faculty, staff and PTA members

Additional Resources

Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping is a valid and useful exercise to help an adult identify where a child might be struggling with stress in their lives. This exercise can be done in groups or one-on-one.

Instructions:

1. Give each child a piece of paper and crayons, markers or colored pencils to draw with. Start by showing an example of a mind map and what it looks like. It is usually best if the instructor makes a mind map earlier. It will help them guide the children through the exercise.
2. Start with a symbol that best represents themselves. The symbol can be anything but help with some ideas like a heart, star, soccer ball. Religious symbol, etc. Make sure to encourage the child that there is no wrong answer and they are free to draw whatever they would like.
3. Designate the upper left corner as the children as they see themselves in school. Have them draw symbols of what they like to do in school, activities, teachers, class assignments and friends, anything that they feel represent their lives at school.
4. Next designate the upper right corner for their family life. Once again encourage symbols that the students feel represent their families, like homes, family pets, or vacations they might have taken. Make sure the emphasis is to draw whatever they would like and the symbols don't necessarily have to be all happy.
5. Finally leave the last two corners to be whatever the students would like to draw. Ideas could be a sport they play, or an after school activity or a special talent they might have. Give the students at least 10 minutes of free draw time to finish up their mind maps.
6. Afterwards, ask for volunteers to share their drawings. Ask children to explain the different areas, but don't push them if they aren't sharing a particular symbol or area.
7. Review all the mind maps created and look for any red flags of unhappy scenes or symbols to check for stressful areas of the child's life or a particular incident. Share any interesting findings with the school counselor.

Mind mapping is a good stress relief tool for children and adults because it helps them to express themselves in an open environment where they are free to express any pent up emotions and feelings positive or negative. This exercise also allows them to participate in a fun activity where there is no right or wrong answer. It is sometimes hard for a child to come out and ask for help when they're experiencing trouble. When given another outlet like drawing they are better able to express frustrations and insecurities that they might be feeling. Make sure to document any findings and inform the school counselor, principal or guardian.

Mind Map Example

